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Office profile: The Tri-cities, Minneapolis, St Paul, Bloomington

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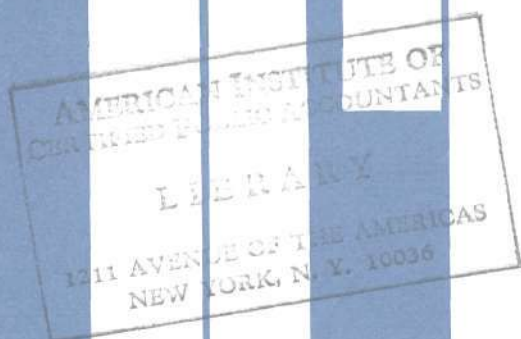
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OCT 9 - 1975

Minneapolis,
St. Paul and
Bloomington

ref



'People Like It Here...'

Minneapolis is a truly civilized city, a city where people are important, where a concern for the quality of life is a prime factor shaping its physical growth and expansion.

The skyline of Minneapolis is dominated by the 775-foot IDS Tower, built by Investors Diversified Services, which forms the focal point of the IDS Center, a complex made up of the Tower, a hotel and a bank building. On most days crowds of tourists, businessmen and shoppers swirl through Crystal Court, a large enclosed mall centered between the hotel, the bank and the tower. You can shop in Crystal Court—so named because of the crystalline appearance of the geometric clear plastic panels forming the roof—spend

several hours in a movie, or just sit at one of several restaurants relaxing and watching the people walk by.

On sunny days shoppers stroll along Nicollet Mall, an eight-block-long shopping mall closed to all traffic except city buses and bicycles and offering pedestrians broad sidewalks, trees, benches and fountains. Should the weather take a turn for the worse, it is possible to get almost anywhere in the downtown area without ever having to set foot on a sidewalk. A skyway system of elevated, glass-enclosed passageways connects major buildings and stores. The system presently ties an eleven-block area of downtown Minneapolis together and is in the process of being expanded.

Tri-Cities

The IDS Tower also serves as headquarters for H&S operations in the Tri-Cities area—Tri-Cities, not Twin Cities. For Fred W. Bassinger, partner in charge in Minneapolis, the Firm's facilities in St. Paul and Bloomington are simply thought of as "office space down the hall." Geographically this makes sense. St. Paul, capital city of Minnesota, and Minneapolis straddle the Mississippi River, with St. Paul on the east bank and Minneapolis on the west. Bloomington, one of the most rapidly growing areas in the state and currently ranked as Minnesota's fourth largest city, lies only about six miles southwest of Minneapolis.

"We may have a unique situation here," Fred admits. "There is a spirit of friendly,

helpful competition among the three offices, but the team concept is paramount. Anyone from any office can be assigned to an engagement if his background and experience qualify him for that particular job."

In a sense, Fred Bassinger, who assumed the post of partner in charge early in 1973 following the death of Burgess Geib, has organized the Tri-Cities operation like a

In top photo (facing page) personnel secretary Lil Davis (l.), staff accountant Larry Olson and tax secretary Ginny Rice enjoy lunch in Crystal Court. At bottom left, H&S employees Elaine Lundsten (l.) and Cindy Ratzke study exhibit at the Walker Art Center. Audit senior Chuck Irrgang (bottom right), a member of the office softball team, connects for a solid hit.



general deploying his troops. The H&S facilities on the nineteenth floor of the IDS Tower serve as headquarters for the three offices and home base for the audit, tax, and MAS staffs as well as the government services department headed by manager John B. Lilja. John, who reports to Michael J. Vinyon, partner in charge of the St. Paul office and governmental specialist, rejoined H&S this past January after serving as deputy state auditor. St. Paul serves as the operations center for Mike Vinyon and partner LeRoy A. Sundby, transportation coordinator. Two of the nation's leading railroads, the Soo Line Railroad Company, headquartered in Minneapolis, and Burlington Northern Inc., based in St. Paul, are clients of H&S. (Burlington Northern was featured in a "profile" in the winter 1974 issue of *H&S Reports*.)

Lynn V. Odland, who was admitted to partnership earlier this year, heads the Bloomington office, which serves as base of operations for our growing small business services practice.

Manager David L. Zuelke, who is in charge of the small business services team under partner Kenneth R. Swanson, said Bloomington, with a population of some 90,000 people, is one of the fastest-growing industrialized sections of the state. The City of Bloomington is, in fact, an audit client of Haskins & Sells as is the Bloomington School District. Both audits were awarded after the opening of our offices there last year.

Our move to Bloomington was made largely at the urging of a nonclient bank which had a number of customers requiring small business services. Lynn Odland noted that the move not only put us close to the small business clients that the local

banks began referring to us, but gave H&S a solid foothold as "permanent residents" of the Bloomington community. Basically the same reasoning was behind the assignment of Rod Larva, a senior with the small business services group, to our offices in St. Paul four or five months before the small business group relocated in Bloomington.

Our small business services practice was formally launched in the then Twin-Cities area about four years ago, but it was not until recently that it really began to pick up a full head of steam. Dave Zuelke, who joined the small business team three years ago, presently heads a staff consisting of himself, two seniors and two staff accountants. "We have about fifty small business services clients at the present time," Dave said, "and almost all of the business was picked up in the past two years." Dave credits much of his group's growing roster of clients to an active practice development program, including regular meetings with bankers, attorneys and brokers. "We try to establish a one-to-one relationship with them," he said, "since that personal approach seems to work quite well."

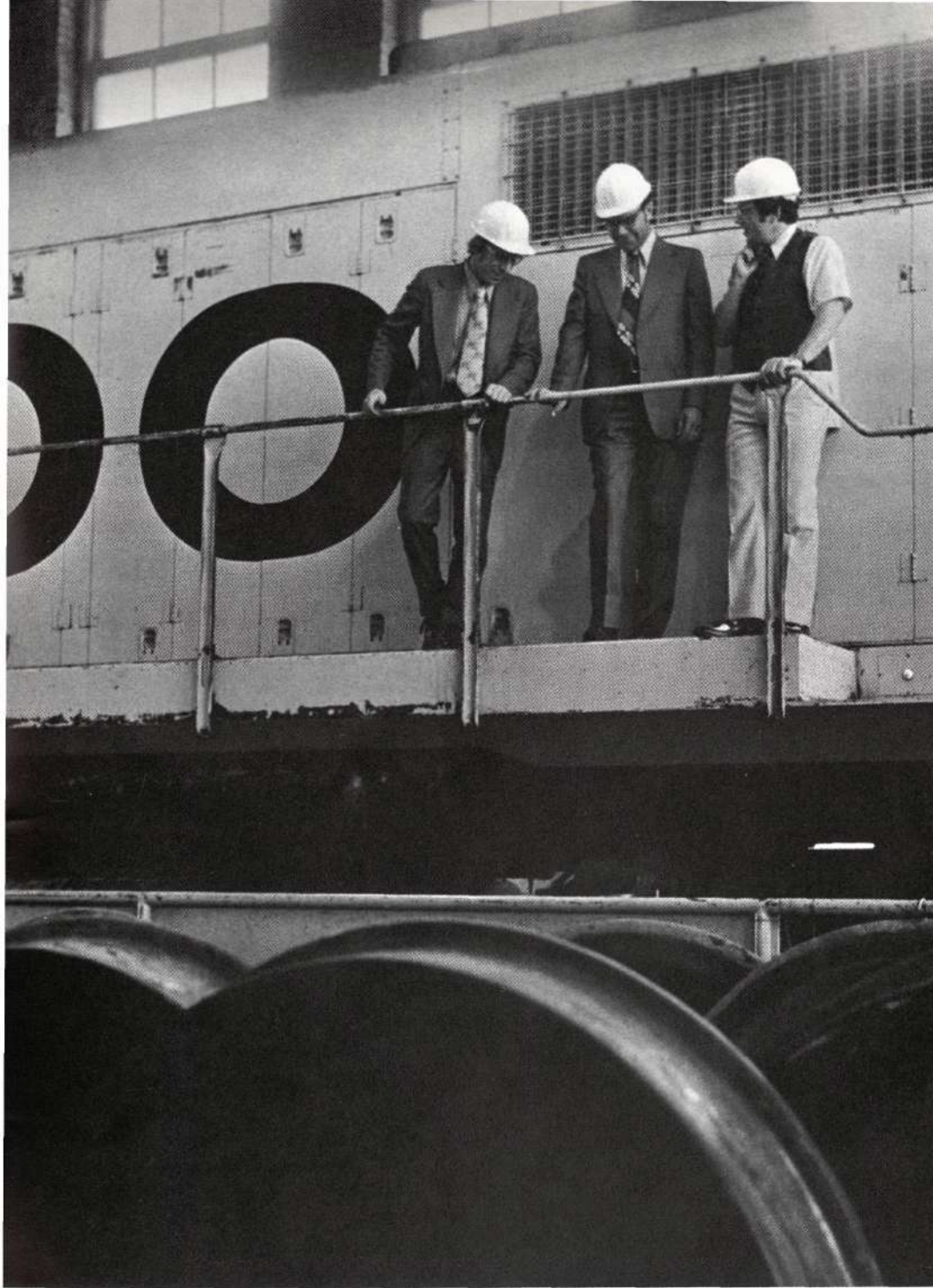
Not unexpectedly, the small business services practice is highly diversified, ranging from retailers and wholesalers to manufacturers and a drug-dependency center. "We've not only been getting more referrals from local banks," Dave pointed out, "but better referrals, clients whose prospects for future growth—and a need for more of our services—appear very strong. The way it looks to me now, we'll probably have to enlarge our small business services staff by next spring, and I think we'll be calling on our MAS group for

In photo above, Richard L. Murlowski (r), vice president for accounting of the Soo Line Railroad Company, discusses maintenance procedures for the line's rolling stock with St. Paul partner LeRoy A. Sundby (c.), our Tri-Cities transportation coordinator, and Ed Robinson, H&S manager on the Soo Line engagement.

Passing through plaza (photo at right) of Federal Reserve Building on the way to H&S offices at the IDS Tower are Minneapolis partner in charge Fred Bassinger (c.), Mike Vinyon (l.), partner in charge in St. Paul, and Lynn Odland, Bloomington partner in charge.

In photo at far right, Ramon Alvarez (r), manager of central finance for Honeywell, Inc., and H&S senior Ken Abeln (2nd r) watch demonstration of POISE (pointing and stabilization element) system. Honeywell engineers Mike Secord (l.) and Bob Grosso (in background) are part of the team that developed the highly sophisticated unit permitting unmanned aircraft to be used for reconnaissance and tracking.



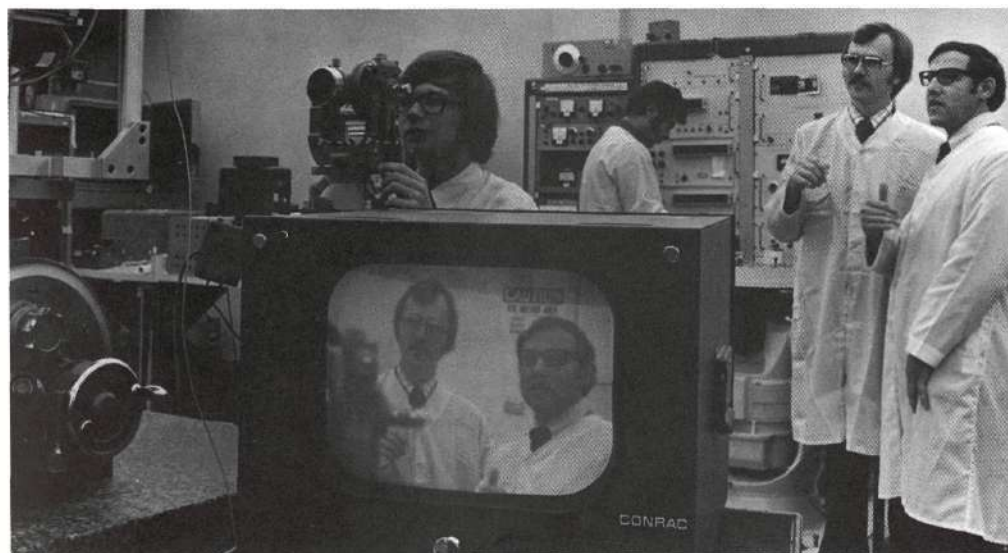


assistance even more than we do at present."

The Tri-Cities MAS group is another growth operation. Stephen A. Faunce, Minneapolis manager, heads a three-man team consisting of himself, consultant Don Carpenter, a CPA with a strong accounting-systems background recruited from the office's audit staff, and consultant Jim Kubiak, a data-processing specialist.

Steve, who had been with client Procter & Gamble before joining H&S early in 1969 in Chicago, had been "commuting" fairly regularly between Chicago and Minneapolis for more than nine months working on MAS engagements before finally transferring permanently to Minneapolis in August 1973. "We've really been moving on MAS," Steve noted, pointing to a very rapid and substantial growth in billings in the last three years. "Some of the recent MAS engagements of which we're particularly proud are one for Burlington-Northern and another for the Social Services Board of the State of North Dakota. For the latter, we've been asked to design and implement a grants management accounting and information system."

Like the small business services group, Steve's MAS section serves clients throughout Minnesota, Wisconsin, the Dakotas and Iowa. "We have a really fine variety of engagements, and at the rate our MAS practice is growing I think we'll have to add a fourth person to the staff very soon and a fifth by the end of this year. Ultimately, I think we'll need a total of six in the group, not only because of the way the practice is growing, but because we want to broaden the type and depth of services we can offer to our clients."





In photo above, enjoying an outing on Lake Nokomis in Minneapolis are (l. to r.) MAS manager Steve Faunce, his wife Susan and their two sons Jeff (11) and David (10). Lake Nokomis is only one of several large lakes right in Minneapolis offering water-sports facilities.

Not your typical Minnesota farm family by any means. Minneapolis partner Burnie Larson and his wife Joyce pose with their four children (l. to r.) Elizabeth (10), Brent (12), David (15) and Daniel (17) on the 20-acre Larson farm in Maple Plain, Minn. Burnie raises Hereford cattle and hay on the farm, located about 20 miles outside Minneapolis.

Growth is one of the outstanding characteristics of our Tri-Cities practice. Despite the overall sluggish economy nationally, there was a substantial growth in our Tri-Cities practice last year, according to Fred Bassinger. "Most of this represents new clients," he pointed out. Born in South Dakota, Fred joined the Firm in 1954 in Minneapolis. "When I began my career with H&S I expected to spend only three or four years in public accounting. When I found that I really enjoyed it, and realized the opportunities it offered for advancement, professional growth and service, I decided that public accounting was the path for me," Fred said. Although most of his time with the Firm has been in Minneapolis, he did spend two years in Chicago for tax training (taxation is his special interest) as well as several months with our Washington, D.C. office.

The practice of our Tri-Cities offices—"About 90 percent of our work is originating, with audit accounting for about 80 percent, tax work for about 12 percent and small business services and MAS for the balance," according to Fred—includes the state of Minnesota as well as portions of Iowa, Wisconsin and the Dakotas. Not unexpectedly, the roots of most of our people there lie deep in this same region of the country.

Partner Donald B. Johnson, technical coordinator for audit activities, was born in Two Harbors, Minnesota and graduated from the University of Minnesota before joining the Firm in Minneapolis in 1960. Partner Donald R. Johnson (no relation to Donald B.) was born in Duluth, Minnesota, graduated from the University of Minnesota and joined the Minneapolis office of H&S in 1950. "D.R." is in charge of the Tri-Cities SEC practice and recruitment activities.

Partner Burnell L. Larson, the office's specialist in both cooperatives and utilities as well as a member of the recruitment group, was born in Parshall, North Dakota, graduated from the University of Minnesota and joined our Minneapolis office in 1950. LeRoy A. Sundby was born in Stephen, Minnesota and joined our Minneapolis office in 1962 after graduating from the University of North Dakota. Lee is financial and transportation specialist for the Tri-Cities offices.

Partner Ken Swanson is technical coordinator for accounting matters. He was born in Minneapolis and joined our office there in 1948 after graduating from St.

Thomas College in St. Paul. Michael J. Vinyon was born in Los Angeles. He joined our Baltimore office in 1959 after graduating from the University of North Dakota and transferred to Minneapolis in 1960. Mike also is government specialist for the Tri-Cities practice.

William B. Brown, who was admitted to partnership this year, was born in Sioux Falls, South Dakota and received a BS from the University of South Dakota and a doctorate in law from the University of Minnesota before joining our New York office in 1966. He transferred to Minneapolis in 1969. Bill is tax specialist for the Tri-Cities offices and heads the tax services group. Lynn V. Odland was born in Britton, South Dakota, graduated from the University of South Dakota, joined our Denver office in 1961 and transferred to Minneapolis in 1965. In addition to being in charge of the Bloomington office, Lynn is responsible for professional and community activities and is chairman of the practice development committee.

If the geographic location of Minneapolis in the American grain belt and at the navigation headwaters of the Mississippi River explains some of our clients, such as Burlington Northern and the Soo Line, both major transporters of grain, and Rahr Malting Company, one of the country's leading producers of malt for the brewing industry, it also emphasizes the diversity of industry in Minneapolis. The city has long been noted as a center for the computer and electronics industries. Two of our largest clients are Honeywell, Inc., which has its corporate headquarters, research and development and other facilities in Minneapolis, and DATA 100, a fast-growing Minneapolis-based designer and manufacturer of data-processing equipment, primarily general-purpose large batch terminal systems.

The Tri-Cities practice, however, is not topheavy in either the agriculture-related or computer-electronics areas. Other clients range from Minnesota Natural Gas and Otter Tail Power Company to Deluxe Check Printing Company, probably the nation's largest manufacturer of checks, checkbooks and related products, and Scorpion, Inc., a leading manufacturer of snowmobiles. A summary of services prepared by the Minneapolis office last year for present and potential clients, in fact, lists eighty-seven separate industries and fields in which the Tri-Cities offices serve clients.





For Fred Bassinger, an outgoing individual whose bubbling manner and easygoing nature almost—but not quite—mask a sophisticated and practical approach to the accounting profession, two elements are of prime importance to the operation of the Tri-Cities offices—people and practice development. “The people we have are of the highest caliber,” he said, “and we can afford to be selective. One factor favoring our recruiting efforts, of course, is the advantage of working for a large international accounting firm like Haskins & Sells. This, in fact, leads to what almost appears to be an interesting contradiction. One of the reasons we can be selective and hold good people is that we recruit most heavily at such highly respected schools as the University of North Dakota and the Business School of the University of Minnesota. People from this area of the country like it here, they don’t want to leave. This is where they were born, where they grew up and were educated and where they want to put down roots.

“On the other hand, many do have a desire to see something of the world and so we usually have a waiting list of people who have volunteered for overseas assignments. The number of international clients we have, such as Honeywell, which offers to our people the possibility of work abroad, serves to help us hire and keep a higher caliber person.” Fred also likes to season his own staff with overseas visitors. Australian David New, in Minneapolis as part of the Firm’s exchange-visitor program, is the third such visitor to our offices there.

The second point Fred considers important is practice retention and development—and he emphasizes that the two

are inseparable. “It is critical to a practice never to underestimate the direct link between practice retention and the level of expertise an office can provide,” he said. “Our clients expect top service and we have to provide it. The only way you can do that is to make sure the people servicing those clients are the best. Frankly, we have enough business to keep good people busy. What’s really vital is a growth of competence, making sure that your good people keep getting better. This is far more important than a mere increase in the number of people you add to your professional staff.”

To ensure that the practice development aspects of the offices’ operations are monitored constantly, a practice development committee meets monthly to review progress and discuss new ideas. Partner Lynn Odland is chairman of the group, which includes partners Don R. Johnson and Mike Vinyon, small business services manager Dave Zuelke, audit managers Dave Knipper and Grady Alderman, MAS manager Steve Faunce, tax manager Jack Reif, and audit seniors Steve Bakke and John Wheatley.

Practice development is almost a preoccupation for our people in the Tri-Cities offices. A bulletin board in the staff room gives information on new clients, and the subject is invariably a key topic of discussion at the office’s regular meetings of partners and managers. Every year the office sponsors a three-day fishing trip for all professionals at Gull Lake in Brainard, Minnesota. Guest speakers usually are brought in for the business meetings making up part of the agenda (in addition to the fishing, tennis and golf tournaments). This year’s speaker was Dayton partner Sherrill

W. Hudson, who discussed his own practice development techniques.

But if our people in Minneapolis are dedicated to the accounting profession, they manage quite well to fill their leisure time. For devotees of organized sports and the outdoors, the Tri-Cities area offers a broad variety of attractions. The three cities are the homes of the Minnesota Vikings football team (for which H&S manager Grady Alderman had been an offensive tackle since 1961 until moving to the Chicago Bears this year), the Minnesota North Stars and Fighting Saints hockey teams and the Minnesota Twins baseball club.

Outdoor activities in winter range from snowmobiling to ice fishing to skiing, while in spring, summer and fall they run the gamut from fishing and hunting to hiking, swimming, boating and camping.

Minneapolis also long ago recognized the importance of culture and the arts to the life and vitality of any city. It is internationally recognized for the quality of its two prestigious art museums, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts and the Walker Art Center; for stage presentations at the Guthrie Theater, a repertory theater built by Sir Tyrone Guthrie; for the outstanding quality of the Minnesota Orchestra; and, last but not least, for the superb preparation and first-class service at any number of fine restaurants in the area.

Minneapolis, in short, is a city keeping pace with the twentieth century while still drawing strength from its roots planted deep in the fertile soil of the American midwest. And, perhaps most important, it is built for people by people who recognize that a city must be more than a group of buildings crowded together. ○



On the facing page, George Gackle (2nd r.), treasurer of Rahr Malting Company, H&S manager Bob Knoll (r.) and senior Gary Witzman (l.) examine sample of malt destined for delivery to a leading brewery with assistant plant manager Jim Stillman. Grain elevators in background are only part of Rahr Malting’s extensive malt-producing facilities in Shakopee, Minn.

Ed Orenstein (r.), president and chairman of DATA 100 Corporation, and Bloomington partner Lynn Odland pause during tour of the corporation’s production facilities in Minneapolis. DATA 100 is a leading manufacturer of data processing equipment, particularly general-purpose large batch terminal systems.